

Parley L. Belnap

History



Brigham Young University School of Music
Professor of Organ/Theory/University Organist 1965- 1998
Interview November 16, 2008

Education:

BA, Brigham Young University, 1950
MA, Brigham Young University, 1956
2 Royal Flemish Conservatory Certificates, Belgium
DMA, University of Colorado, 1975

Interview with Mike Ohman-November 16, 2008

This interview will provide a bit of history of the University, the School of Music, and the organ area; and also your background and perspective on your work in the area of the organ—what you tried to initiate, to develop, to accomplish. We'd like to start this interview by talking about your growing up, your education, your beginnings in music, events that may have shaped your life along the way—in short, a little history about yourself.

I was born in Hooper, Utah, Weber County, a farming community near the Great Salt Lake. (There was then one ward in Hooper, which has since become four or five stakes.) I am the seventh and youngest child—the sixth son—of John Marion Belnap and Zina Hattie Taylor Belnap. The sixth child passed away from pneumonia when he was about two months old. The family, now very concerned, wanted me to survive. Somewhere along the line, my parents attended the temple, where my mother was given a blessing—information I didn't know until 1964, after I had a master's degree and two degrees from the Royal Flemish Conservatory in Antwerp, Belgium. She was promised that she would have a son who would be gifted in music. My father told me of that blessing at my mother's funeral.

As I grew up, I had a love for music. I started to study piano with my aunt, Mabel Hall Belnap—a wonderful lady who lived about a mile and a half from our home. My mother claims that she never had to ask me to practice because I was so in love with music. I took lessons from my aunt for several years.

I was also in love with my parents and was grateful for them. I had duties on the farm as I grew up—milking cows, feeding the animals, and riding a horse bareback to take the cows to the pasture about a mile away. Sometimes the water runoff from the mountains was so severe that our pasture was almost completely under water. The South Fork of the Weber River went through our pasture, and sometimes I would have to cross the river on the horse. As it swam, I would hang onto its mane. I hoed beets, weeded and picked tomatoes—all the traditional farm work.

Sometimes if I practiced the piano, I wouldn't have to go work in the field. Perhaps that was something that persuaded me to practice, but I think it was that I really loved the piano.

KSL had a fifteen-minute, noontime radio broadcast of the Tabernacle recitals. When I was home during the summer, I listened to those programs every day. Thus, my love and interest in the organ grew. The organists at that time were Frank Asper, Alexander Schreiner, and Wade N. Stephens.

During this time, I had many sore throats. When I was about fourteen or fifteen, I contracted the mumps and was home in bed for three weeks. During the following summer, as I was in the field helping my father gather hay to stack, I didn't feel well. My father, quite concerned, told my mother that they needed to get me to the doctor—I wasn't a complainer. They learned that I had rheumatic fever, so my activities were limited for a time. The doctor told me that I would

need to choose a profession that didn't require a lot of physical work.

The fever and my sickness lasted through that summer, but for some reason, I was taken to a clinic that wasn't necessarily a medical clinic. I was asked to drink something. I then couldn't have any salad dressings, only lemon juice on my salads. The restricted diet must have helped, because neither sulfa nor penicillin was yet developed. I'm sure that prayers and blessings by my father and brother played a big role. The fever went away, though I still had a heart murmur. I did have to restrict my activities.

Being somewhat independent, I still went out and worked on the farm. For example, I would irrigate and do other farm work which my doctor wouldn't have put a stamp of okay on. The illness turned me more and more toward music. I don't think I was studying privately during this time, but I was still playing the piano.

When I was a deacon, my bishop, Levi Beus, asked me to be the priesthood pianist. That was invigorating and inspiring to me. I hadn't yet learned about the organ, though we did have an electric reed organ in the ward. Mounted on top of the organ were show pipes, so what did I know about a pipe organ at that point in my life? One or two ladies played the organ; I played only the piano.

I remember that one year I decided to make an arrangement of "Come, Come, Ye Saints" for the Fourth of July celebration. (I can still wiggle through it today.) I suppose it was kind of imaginative, given that I was a twelve-year-old. That gave me a lot of motivation to practice.

The school at Hooper went from the first grade to the tenth grade; for the eleventh and twelfth grades, we were bused to Weber High School in Ogden. I did a lot of accompanying of soloists, and soon developed a fair

technique. A ninth-grade teacher at the Hooper School (whose name I don't remember) thought I had talent, and she inspired and encouraged me in my music. She talked to Mona Smith, a piano teacher in Ogden. I was able to study piano with this wonderful lady—a single woman, not a member of the Church. She was also Lorin F. Wheelwright's teacher, and Loren was the one who established the E. Mona Smith Scholarship at BYU in her name.

Mona Smith was an excellent teacher; she helped me develop my technique and the discipline I needed as preparation for a career in music. She helped me prepare for some competitions at Weber High School. I was able to win the high school piano competition. I don't suppose I was as outstanding as the pianists of today, but it was important to me. She championed me. After I married, she became a good friend to my wife, who would sometimes take her to concerts. Then Mona left the area for health reasons.

She knew that I had a love for the organ, and she was a close friend of Frank W. Asper. She arranged for me to study with him. I would travel first by car from Hooper to Ogden, which is about eight miles, and then take the Bamberger commuter train to Salt Lake City. I would then climb up Main Street to the McCune School of Music, the most elegant building one could imagine. This was a mansion which the McCune family had given to the Church within which to train musicians. The teachers were wonderful: Mabel Borg Jenkins who was Grant Johannsen's teacher and Gladys Gladstone, a wonderful pianist and teacher. These are the two outstanding teachers I remember. Alexander Schreiner was doing some teaching there. I studied piano mostly; Frank Asper took me through the Art of Finger Dexterity by Karl Czerny—the whole thing. I ordered all of Bach's *Two and Three-Part Inventions*. I don't know how well I played them, but I satisfied Brother Asper. I learned works by

Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy, Poulenc, and others.

After I graduated from high school, I attended Weber College. While there, I was able to accompany the Dorian Singers. They were conducted by Roland Parry, a very prominent musician in Ogden. He produced the summer musical *All Faces West*. He was very helpful and respectful to me.

I graduated from Weber College, where I had had wonderful experiences in my studies. Claire Johnson was the theory teacher and, again, someone who encouraged and championed me. The wife of Roy Harris, the famous American composer, came to Weber College for some occasion, and I played for her a movement from one of Beethoven's piano sonatas. Those are some of my cherished experiences.

I also knew Claire Anderson, a very gifted theater organist who played at the Egyptian Theater. I respected him highly. I never studied organ at that time. Also, he wasn't teaching many classes, though he was on the faculty at Weber College.

Then I was able to come to Brigham Young University but kept studying privately with Frank Asper. Because I still had little money, Dr. Asper gave me piano and organ lessons free of charge, to encourage me. He had me work for him to pay for my lessons. He was the conductor of the McCune Symphony Orchestra. I don't know how he did everything he did. He taught piano and organ, counterpoint, and theory. I think he had to do that, because he didn't get much money for playing at the Tabernacle. The McCune Symphony Orchestra was the city symphony at that time. Many of the people who later played in the Utah Symphony had experience in that orchestra.

One of the things Asper would have me do was bind the music for the different

instruments of the McCune Symphony Orchestra. I remember the Gamble hinge—you bound the music so that the players could turn the pages easily. At one time, I cleaned the couch in his studio. What a great heart he had.

Dr. Asper had me give a recital on the organ in the Assembly Hall, which at that time was an old Austin—three manuals, but not a lot of independent stops.

J. J. Keeler and Frank Asper were not the best of friends, though they were courteous to each other. I took some of J. J. Keeler's classes at BYU. His organ problems class was especially helpful to me. He had the Organ Guild sponsor my recital in the Provo Tabernacle, and I appreciated that very much. After playing the recital, I was so keyed up that I could not sleep the rest of the night. Brother Keeler told me the next day that he would have given me an A- on my recital, which was quite a concession for him. He was gracious and encouraging to me.

One of the pieces I played at the recital was the *Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C Major* of Bach—quite a challenge to play. I also played the Chorale and *Toccata from the Suite Gothique* by Leon Boellmann, as well as other pieces.

From Brother Keeler I picked up some hints on the gap system and how to measure intervals. He was helpful, a real friend to me.

I graduated from BYU with a bachelor's degree in theory, with an emphasis on organ in 1950.

Then I had the desire to go on a mission. My father had served a mission in Germany in about 1908. He had some tough times there—for example, being put in jail a few times. He loved his mission, and circumstances allowed me to be called to the East German Mission in 1950. When I was given a physical examination for my mission, I no longer had

the heart murmur. World War II was over by then, but evidence of the bombing was everywhere. There was a cell of cities in northern Germany—Kiel, Flensburg, and further south, Hannover, Celle, Hildesheim, Braunschweig, and then West Berlin. Whenever we went to the mission home in Berlin, we either flew or were able to take a military train so we wouldn't be stopped by the East German authorities.

When eight of us left in September 1950 to go to our mission, we traveled on a luxury liner. (Miss Utah, a talented singer, was on the ship, and I got to accompany her singing.) We landed at Le Havre, and then went to Paris and from Paris to Hannover. During the night at Hannover, someone broke into the room of one of the missionaries and stole his passport. We became aware of a different culture and the needs the German people had as they pursued their lives in a different way.

I was sent to Celle, a beautiful city. I believe that Bach visited the castle there when he was a young teenager. He had some contact with the French court there.

When I arrived in Europe, I had some of my music with me. Whenever we had some free time, I would go to a church and play the organ.

Then I was transferred to the city of Hildesheim, a bit south of Hannover, a wonderful old city that had been thoroughly bombed during the war. There had been a branch in the city some time ago, but there was no longer a branch. My companion, Robert Killpack (who became a dentist) and I had the wonderful opportunity to open that city to missionary work. Elder Killpack was transferred after about three months or so, and I was left there for thirteen months. We were able to see the fruits of our labors as we developed a branch. A brother who had fled from East Germany with his wife became the branch president. I had three different

companions there, Elders Killpack, Otto Werner, and David Wood.

I was then transferred to Berlin-Dahlem and worked there for another thirteen months. It was a glorious experience. I was able to play some of the organs in these cities. We had a mission conference in a high school in Flensburg where there was a three-manual pipe organ. I was asked to play for the conference—an illuminating experience for me.

There followed a special experience in Berlin when President David O. McKay came to the city in 1952, the year after he became president of the Church. He held a conference for all the Saints from East Germany and West Berlin. Walter Stover, of the Stover Mattress Company of Salt Lake City, had been the mission president, and then Arthur Glaus became president. Stover had built chapels for the Saints in Germany.

We held a conference for the missionaries in the Berlin-Dahlen chapel in a beautiful area of the city. President McKay spoke, and I played the pump organ. The chapel also had a nice grand piano. He then wanted to shake the hand of every missionary. We would tell him our name and where we were from. When I told him that my name was Elder Parley Belnap, he asked, "Who's your father?"

I answered, "John M. Belnap."

"He was my student at Weber Academy," President McKay said.

This was now fifty years later, and he remembered my father. He added, "You tell your father than I'm so proud of him to have a son on a mission."

You can imagine what that did for me.

In the Palast, a large theater in Berlin which the mission was able to reserve, there was a theater organ. We gathered with all the Saints

who came from East Germany, and I got to play the organ for this conference. At this period of time, there was a story of two children who came whose mother was crippled. President McKay gave the children a handkerchief to give to their mother, along with his blessing. When they returned home and gave the mother the handkerchief, the stories are that it helped her recover.

The Berlin wall had not yet been erected. There were missionaries in East Germany. Though they were limited in how they could talk to people, they could still work. Police officers would often come to Sacrament meetings to see what the Church members were talking about. One sister said that she once had to talk about faith three or four Sundays in a row, which was kind of a challenge to think up something new to say.

A great number of East-German missionaries had come to West Berlin where they were taught how to tract and give out copies of the Book of Mormon. It happened that all this work was done in our area of Berlin, so we missionaries received all the names of people who wanted copies of the Book of Mormon. Then we had to go to those homes and pass the books out, upwards of eighty books, as I recall. We made some excellent contacts and had some inspirational experiences from that opportunity.

My mission was two and a half years long. I had studied German at BYU, and that was very helpful. I'd even had a class called "The Gospel in German," from Arthur Watkins (the son of the U.S. Senator).

I had excellent companions. One of them was a descendant of William Clayton, who wrote "Come, Come, Ye Saints." This elder later became a professor of history at the University of Utah.

My mission ended in March 1953, at which point in time I had decided that I would write

to Marcel Dupré (I don't remember how I got his address). I asked if I could come to Paris and study with him. A group of eight of us missionaries who had gone to Europe together received permission to tour together after our missions—something unheard of today. We toured part of Italy and in France, and then I was dropped off in Paris. Dupré allowed me to come and study with him. I stayed in Paris for a while—a very expensive stay.

Dupré was then one of the world's finest recitalists, known worldwide. He would have been in his prime at this time.

He was an incredible improviser, but perhaps had been in his prime earlier. I think it was in the 1920s when he toured the United States and took the country by storm—his first big tour.

In his home Marcel Dupré had a four-manual Cavaille organ in a big *salle* (French for "room"). He also had two nine foot grand pianos and about two hundred seats as a recital hall. He said, "I'm going on a concert tour. I'll be back in three weeks. I want you to have memorized for me Bach's "Toccata Adagio and Fugue."

The practicing was limited, because masses are held in Catholic churches all during the day and the priests didn't like organ students to practice. A music store in Paris had a two-manual and pedal electrified harmonium. I went there to practice, but the time was very expensive. The university church had a very nice pipe organ on which I could practice occasionally.

Finally, someone who had been studying at BYU (I don't remember his name) had rented a two-manual electrified pedal harmonium. I was able to bring that instrument to my apartment, with limited time to practice on it. I couldn't practice after six o'clock at night

and couldn't start until eight o'clock in the morning.

It was so expensive to live in Paris that I once didn't have anything to eat. I went without food for about a week, just drinking water. Then an inspiration came to me: "Go to the YMCA." I went there and asked if I could work for my meals. I was allowed to work for my lunch and my supper. Thus I was able to continue to stay in Paris.

I had to memorize everything for Dupré. I memorized the Toccata, Adagio, and Fugue in C Major, First Trio Sonata, the Second Trio Sonata, and the Toccata in F Major of Bach; the Prelude, Fugue and Variation and the Chorale in A minor of Cesar Franck; the Cortège and Litanie of Dupré—a total of about a hundred pages. I studied with Dupré from March until the end of August, 1953.

When I came home, my father gave me a tomato patch, and, if I took care of it, I could have whatever I made from marketing half of it. I was able to earn enough money to start school again. Upon hearing I was back, Dr. John R. Halliday, then chair of the Department of Music, was able to give me a scholarship to BYU. Thus I returned to BYU for a Masters degree, majoring in music theory with a minor in organ. There was not an organ performance degree at the time. I, of course, studied organ with J.J. Keeler, who was very helpful. Because I had studied with Dupré, it was a plus for me as well as for him. Brother Keeler was most gracious and wonderful to study with for the discipline he was to instill in me.

I also took courses from Crawford Gates and Carl Fuerstner. I didn't study with John Halliday, though I did accompany some of his choirs. I had voice lessons with Newell Weight, a wonderful choir director. My thesis was an original concerto for organ and orchestra.

Incidentally, in 1997, two of my students, David Pickering and James Carter, cooked up a surprise birthday party for me. I was "invited to lecture on music for the family in James Carter's stake," but when I arrived, there was a big crowd of faculty, students, and family members. After dinner, symphony musicians from BYU performed a movement of my concerto. Sabin Levy, an Israeli graduate student in organ performance, was the organ soloist. It was a wonderful surprise.

What were the facilities at BYU when you came—where did you study, what did you play?

The music faculty and facilities were on lower campus. There was a three-manual Robert Morton theatre organ in College Hall.

J. J. Keeler would have said it had "judicious unification."

J.J. had a Baldwin electronic organ, and then got a bigger upgrade of some kind in his office on lower campus. The organ in the Joseph Smith Building on the upper campus was the former Salt Lake City Tabernacle organ. Underneath the stage in that building there were three organs: a three-rank Moller, unified; a Schoenstein three-rank, unified; and a Hammond. These were our practice organs. I attended the Provo Eighth Ward, on Second North and Fifth East. The old building had been torn down, but the organ was kept. I able was to practice on that organ. Glen Montague, a protégé of Newell Weight who became a famous high school and junior college choral director, and I worked together. It was a nice experience.

We also had on campus what we called "Little Carnegie," an army barracks building that had been modified into little rooms with pianos in them. You could hear the other pianists playing. It was quite a cacophony of sound. I guess you could also occasionally practice on

the big piano in the Joseph Smith Building auditorium or ballroom.

Those were basically the facilities for some time—until the Harris Fine Arts Building was built in 1964.

In the fall of 1965, when Robert Cundick went to the Tabernacle, I was hired to take his place. I was hired as a theory faculty, with the ability to teach organ.

That was the year when many new faculty were hired. Who were those who came with you?

Quite soon thereafter, Paul Pollei, Gaylen Hatton (in theory, but also a horn player), David Randall (a little later), Robert Cundick (who came from Salt Lake City on Tuesdays to teach counterpoint in the afternoon and organ lessons in the Provo Tabernacle in the morning), and Merrill Bradshaw (who had come a little before me).

Bona: Merrill Bradshaw called Parley when we were teaching in Brigham City and asked if Parley was interested in a position opening up at BYU.

Parley: One of my experiences before coming to BYU, which helped shaped my thinking, was that I was hired by the General Music Committee of the Church to train organists. After my master's degree, the army still was drafting. I was told, "You have had enough deferments; you have to go to the army now."

So in January 1956, I was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Fort Ord, California. In the meantime, I had the opportunity to be a guest organist in the Salt Lake Tabernacle with Robert Cundick. The Tabernacle Choir went to Europe in 1955 to dedicate the Swiss Temple. Frank Asper and Alexander Schreiner accompanied the Choir, so somebody was needed to play the recitals at

the Tabernacle. With two weeks' notice, I was asked to be a guest organist for thirty-five recitals. Robert Cundick and I were guests organists together at the Tabernacle for that summer season—a wonderful experience. I practiced day and night.

I was then able to complete my master's degree, finish my concerto and get it approved. Carl Feurstner and Crawford Gates signed it, but I hadn't taken my oral exam. That's when I went to Fort Ord for basic training, and then a second week of basic training. I was sent to Germany to work for the army there. In the meantime, I was allowed to come home and take my final oral exam, get my master's degree, and then go to Europe. When I arrived at Fort Dix, New Jersey, I went to church in the morning. The branch president there got to choose who traveled on a boat or fly to Europe; I flew, while the rest of my company had to go by boat. (What a special reward for going to church that day!)

When I was working on my master's degree, Bona Belliston came to BYU. We were on the stake Sunday School Board together. She started working on her master's the quarter I finished my degree and was drafted into the army and eventually sent to Permasens, Germany. Unbeknownst to me, she was later called on a mission to Germany. While in the army I visited the Hannover, Germany Branch to see friends from my mission, and whom should I meet but Sister Bona Belliston?

When I was stationed in Pirmasens, I became acquainted with some special families. I practiced at the Pirmasens Lutherkirche and met the Pardalls—an incredible musical family. The husband was the church organist.

I was appointed as the supply clerk for the American Dependent School, so I ordered everything from pencils to desks to books. The fact that I knew German was both

helpful and a hindrance. At the school, there was no music teacher, so they asked me to organize the choir. We put on an operetta, *Tom Sawyer*. We had to put up a boxing ring in front of the stage, so we'd have room for all the kids to perform.

I had a feeling that I should write to Flor Peeters, in Belgium, and ask if I could come on some weekends and study organ with him. I wrote him a letter, and He said he'd be happy to have me come and for me to arrange a time. The commanding officer arranged on Friday evening for me to have a weekend pass. I would leave on a train about six o'clock and go to Mannheim, Germany. From there I would travel to Brussels, which took all night. I'd arrive in Brussels at eight o'clock the next morning, and then travel to Mechelen (*Melins* in French). I would meet Flor Peeters and have a lesson at eleven o'clock for an hour. At about four o'clock, I'd get back on the train that afternoon, travel all night again, and be back in time for church on Sunday.

I took lessons for over a year with Flor Peeters, every so often, maybe every two months. I was in Germany for about a year and four months, so I took lessons as I could. The blessing was that he understood my situation; I had the handicap that I couldn't practice very much. However, he was complementary and encouraging to me. I also learned that there was such a thing as an American-Belgium Educational Foundation. I applied to that foundation for a scholarship, and was awarded it. I'm sure that it was in part because Flor Peeters knew me and my determination. The Belgian-American Educational Foundation was developed between the two countries after the First World War, during Herbert Hoover's time.

I didn't have a lot of time to practice—I'd just try to find time when I could. I would practice Wednesday evenings at the Lutherkirche in Pirmasens, and then at another Lutheran

church in Waldfischbach on Saturdays. I also practiced on the Hammond organ in the base chapel.

After my release from the army, I had come home and was taking some more classes that fulfilled my educational requirement to teach in the public schools. I did my student teaching at Springville High School, under Glen Montague. Dan Martino was my BYU education advisor.

I returned to Belgium in 1958 to study with Flor Peeters on the scholarship. For some reason, the Foundation had thought I was still in Europe, so it didn't provide me funds to travel there. That was another hurdle: How would I pay for my trip to Europe? It was summer, and I was to be there in September. A lady by the name of Zera Tonks from Springville, whom I had taught organ lessons in the past, as well as some other ladies, learned of my transportation problem. Sister Tonks had an enormous clientele of piano students, so she gave me most of her piano students to teach for the summer. I was thus able to pay my way to Europe.

I had a very good experience at the Royal Flemish Conservatory and was able to earn the First Prize Diploma with Honors in organ, which included a repertoire of Bach chorales, and I had to improvise, mostly in the romantic style. I'd been practicing for two years how to improvise. My first exam consisted of playing thirty Bach chorales, which I had virtually memorized. Some were open, some were just figured bass, some were just soprano based, and others were just melodies. But I'd worked them out ahead of time.

Then I had improvisation. I was given a theme and thirty minutes to think through what I would do. Then, I had to improvise for about five minutes in a certain style. I also had to play a big Bach work.

After that, the school imposed another Bach piece which I had to learn in a month's time and then play my big recital, which included quite a bit of repertoire. That went well.

I went through my Cesar Franck work flawlessly, but when I came to the last page, I thought, "Oh, one more page to go." Then I made a mistake. I learned not to congratulate myself until it was over. I still got the prize, with high honors, in spite of one goof in the pedal.

Bona had gone on a mission to Germany, and I received the inspiration that I needed to start writing to her. When I told her my dilemma, she said, "That probably happened to you to prevent you from making more serious mistakes in the future." That was good counsel.

When I came home, I started working for the Church again and Bona and I started courting more seriously through letters. I was teaching for the Church, traveling to different places, covering many stakes. That's when I discovered Clay Christiansen and gave him his first twelve lessons. I gave him some counsel that helped him become Tabernacle Organist. Both he and I were blessed in that. You never know how you can touch people's lives.

I taught for the Church in different parts of Canada (Cardston, Calgary, Lethbridge, Raymond), then in Colorado, Idaho, Washington State, Oregon, California, Las Vegas, and Southern Utah. These were wonderful experiences which helped shape my thinking about what I could do to help organists.

When I taught, I did both the organ and the conducting instruction. There were two conducting courses: one for congregational singing and one for choir.

Bona and I had kind of a different courtship, because of my traveling. We married on June

22, 1962, in the Salt Lake Temple. I was teaching in San Francisco and Palo Alto when we married.

I wanted to go back and get the higher diploma in organ performance, so we were working and planning and saving money to do that. The last part of December 1962, we left for Belgium to study a third time with Flor Peeters. We arrived in January and tried to find a place to live. The mission president, President Van Slooten arranged for us to live upstairs in the Brussels Flemish branch house on Rue Houzeau de Lehaie, in Schaerbeek and gave us a good deal on our rent. Before we arrived, the missionaries had failed to turn off the water during a severe cold spell, so the pipes froze and broke causing the branch house was flooded. President Van Slooten wanted someone to live there so such a thing wouldn't happen again.

I bought a pedal piano and had it moved into our apartment. I began my studies in January, 1963. Bona was pregnant with our first son. I was traveling from Brussels to Antwerp for my classes, then to Flor Peeters' home in Mechelen for lessons. It all worked out pretty well.

David was born on May 24 in the Red Cross Hospital, so we had our "Brussels sprout."

I worked hard on my exam on my pedal piano and on two or three different organs. Bona was able to do some work for an American lawyer in Brussels to earn a little extra money. I was called as a counselor in the Brussels Flemish branch presidency. I was able to conduct the meetings in spite of my limited language ability. Because I knew French, German and English, I was able to understand a lot of what went on.

Flor Peeters conducted his class in Flemish, but he translated into English, because there were always Americans in the class.

My first exam was similar to my earlier exam, and after that exam, my mother died. We felt that I should go home for her funeral. Bona stayed in Brussels with our son while I went home. That's when my father told me of the blessing that had been given to my mother—that I would be gifted in music. My course had been set, but if that had been told me earlier, perhaps I would have gone into music because of that blessing. I learned the power of what a blessing can do to one's life.

Peeters said to me, when I told him of my mother's death, "When you come back, you play your recital for your mother." That showed me his character.

I was successful in passing the exam, though I was a little fearful because of the earlier experience. At some time about then, Bob and Charlotte Cundick came to visit us. I took him to hear Flor Peeters play. Bob was then publishing music for a company in England and gave Flor Peeters a copy of some of that music.

At that time, Bob was the organist for the Hyde Park LDS chapel in London. Roy Darley had been there for a year, and then Bob went over for two years. Bob decided, for some reason, that he wanted to go home that summer. He asked me if I would like to be the organist during that summer. I said I'd love to. I'm glad he asked me, because that gave us an income, a nice place to stay and a nice experience in London.

We got a letter of appointment from the First Presidency, signed by David O. McKay, for me to become the Hyde Park organist; a thrilling experience.

We put everything in and on top of our Volkswagen Bug, including a clavichord and a playpen, and traveled to London looking like the Beverly Hillbillies. In England, we had to learn to drive on the "wrong side of the road."

In London and had to play six recitals a week. The chapel has a nice organ. I played recitals through August—every day except Monday. We left London to return to the United States the first part of October.

I returned and taught organ lessons for the General Music Committee in Brigham City, Las Vegas and different places in Utah and Idaho. I taught lessons for Utah State University. Then, in the spring of 1965, the position opened at BYU and Merrill Bradshaw asked me if I was interested. I decided that BYU was where I should be and felt impressed to accept the position. I came to BYU in August 1965. Our second son was born on August 13, just before we moved to Provo.

Max Dalby at Utah State also wanted me to work there and was trying to establish a position. I was contracted as a visiting professor at Utah State and taught every other Saturday for several years. I also helped get a nice organ at the University.

My first semester at BYU, I was assigned to teach sixteenth-century counterpoint and first-year theory. I'd only taken a one-quarter class myself of that counterpoint. David Sargent was a student in that class, and he still thinks I was a good teacher.

I had you the next year for theory, and also thought you were a good teacher.

I loved to teach first and second-year theory, which included ear training as part of the theory courses. I also taught eighteenth century counterpart and private organ. Then I was advised that my masters and two degrees at the Royal Flemish Conservatory were not enough and that I had to get a doctorate. I accepted the challenge and began study at the University of Michigan under Marilyn Mason. I spent a couple of summers with her. One summer in between those summers, I severely

injured my ankle in an automobile accident and wasn't able to go.

I was accepted into the program at Ann Arbor, but then decided, since we had four boys by then, that the University of Colorado was also a wonderful school and much closer. I transferred there and studied under Everett Hilty and Don Vollstedt, who were very good teachers. Hilty had a good sense of humor.

To finish my doctorate, I had to play six recitals, some of them lecture recitals. I had to write papers for each one. One paper was on the Tabernacle organ, and Barbara Owens used my research for part of her research in her book on the Salt Lake Tabernacle Organ.

When you came to BYU, what was your hope relative to the organ area?

I felt I wanted to bring scholarship, spirituality, expertise and excellence to BYU because it's such a wonderful place. I wanted to share with good students what I'd learned from all my experiences. I thought a number of students could be more dedicated to the principles of the gospel and more supportive of the Church. I never wanted to hamper their faith but wanted them to become excellent in their field and their performance, and still love the Church.

One of my colleagues got his doctorate and then sometime later abandoned the Church. Cruelly, he sent his scriptures back to his parents, writing, "I won't need these anymore." Though he had wonderful talent, that was the wrong thing to do.

Who are the significant students you've had at BYU? Some have made significant musical statements on their own.

Yes, Clay Christiansen, Linda Swenson Margetts, James Welch, David Chamberlin, Heidi Alley, Andrew Unsworth, Michael Ohman, David Ralphs, David Lines, Ryan

Murphy, Marcos Krieger, Sabin Levy (Israeli Student), Joseph Nielsen, David Pickering, Daniel Berghaut, Elizabeth Egbert Berghaut, Xiaojun Lu, (Chinese student), Kimberly Keller Moody, Nanae Woolf, and many, many more.

What was your academic focus at BYU, along with your teaching performance?

I taught organ registration, organ repertoire, organ pedagogy, and the history of organ. Though I loved theory, at one point Newell Dayley, Music Department Chair, asked me to focus more in the organ area rather than in theory.

At one time, we had a cadre full of Wickes organs. We built the program at BYU on your expertise. When you came, I think we had the Walcker organ, which came to the recital hall in 1970. We had an old, hand-me-down, electronic Allen organ in the concert hall. The practice rooms in the old Joseph Smith Building were moved to the Harris Fine Arts Center, sort of helter-skelter. They were just ripped out of JSB and plugged in the new center by Wicks, when Wicks put in six new organs in four practice rooms and two offices.

When I first came in 1965, we had four Wicks practice organs, one Moller, a three-rank practice organ, and one Schoenstein, a three-rank practice organ. These had been in the basement of the Joseph Smith Building. Then we had a Moller donated by Dr. Duane Davis. We had two Wicks teaching organs—a two-manual in C-250, and a three-manual in E-208.

In 1970, the Walker Organ Company of Germany installed the pipe organ in the recital hall. We also used the Provo Tabernacle organ for many recitals. It was rebuilt by Wayne Carroll. That organ served us for a number of years.

Over the years, we felt the need to upgrade the practice facilities—that was one of our driving needs. All the Wicks organs were replaced with a variety of new organs to exemplify the different actions that our students should become acquainted with: the mechanical action, electrical-pneumatic action, and a combination of pipe and electronic instruments. A Bigelow organ was put in, and also a Coulter and a Wilhelm (all mechanical action practice organs). These added a lot of sensitivity to the keyboard and to the playing of our students. We acquired a new three-manual Schoenstein, which used the old Austin console from the Salt Lake City Assembly Hall organ. A new Casavant organ has been put in the practice rooms in the basement, plus a P&S organ from England. There's a new portative organ available for recitals and concerts.

In E-208 we have a lovely organ from Ireland, by Kenneth Jones, a three-manual, mechanical-action organ, twenty-two ranks. It serves very well its teaching purpose. In C-250, we have a Rodgers combination pipe-electronic organ, four manuals. It has served very well to instruct our students. We have been blessed with excellent practice facilities.

Another blessing to the program of training organists for the Church is the group organ-teaching studio. The twelve organs have been expanded with computers on each organ to help with training students to play church organs. It's a valuable aid to developing organists for the Church.

A new organ, built by Allen, has also been added to the de Jong Concert Hall. It's been a great help to services and concerts in that hall. We have a new Allen organ in the Marriott Center, which has the capacity to digitize different types of organs—the German baroque, the French romantic, the American classic, and the English. It's really four organs, available at the push of a button, and this gives us the wonderful opportunity to

experience what had existed and does exist in the world today.

That was one of my hopes—to give students the experience of different types of organs, and to serve electronic organ needs at BYU.

You also developed and published a method of hymn playing, or you developed the hymns so that the novice or less talented or less experienced musician could finger and pedal the hymns. You also organized the workshop.

When I was training students in the Church training program throughout the United States and in Western Canada, I conceived the idea of making exercises more practical. We had the exercises from different method books, which were valuable and helpful, but the people coming for twelve weeks to play for church services needed more practical and usable help. Using the hymns, I wrote different studies for the different hands. Namely, I wrote a lot of left-handed pedal duets, which is a real challenge for the organist, in playing their feet independently from their hands. I constructed many exercises like that based on hymns, and I used these in my classes.

When I returned to teach at BYU, Robert Cundick had heard about what I had done in my teaching in different Church classes for the General Music Committee. He asked me to show him what I had done. When he looked at it, he said, "I want you to prepare that for publication, and I'll see if I can get Deseret Book to publish it."

I prepared an edition that came out in 1970, published by Deseret Book. I tried to use hymns to prepare students, when they graduated, to leave and function on their own—from total dependence to independence. That was my philosophy, and I tried to use the simplest and gradually increase it to more difficult.

When the new hymnbook came out in 1985, it was necessary to write a new edition of *Hymn Studies for Organists* because so many of the keys had been changed and new hymns added. I prepared the new edition, using some one hundred hymns, including many of the new ones.

It's been very successful, a wonderful asset to young musicians in the Church, especially pianists, who move from the piano to the organ. Sometimes that's a bit of a challenge.

When I approached Deseret Book with the new edition, Sherry Dew was the new manager. She didn't feel that was the direction she wanted to go. My wife and I decided that, with the help of Carr Printing in Bountiful, we would put the book out on our own, which we did for a number of years. Carr Printing printed them and we had quite a successful business in promoting the publication.

When we went to England on our mission in 2003, we decided that we didn't want to continue to manage our *Hymn Studies* from afar. We gave the right to BYU to publish, and to use the proceeds there from for organ scholarships in the future.

When J. J. Keeler retired and I was given the responsibility to be head of the organ area, I wrote some goals for the organ area—what should happen professionally and spiritually to develop organists for the Church. It was about a four-page document containing counsel and inspiration I felt I had received. One of the goals was to develop an organ workshop to train organists and other Church musicians as appropriate.

While teaching for the General Music Committee in Alberta, Canada, I noticed a distinct difference between American students and the Canadian students. Each spring and summer, many of the Canadian students were diligently practicing and preparing for their

certification examinations for their various institutions--Toronto Conservatory, etc. They were preparing piano and other instrument exams, theory exams, etc. and were practicing more seriously and earnestly than many of their American counterparts.

I thought that such a certification program at BYU would be a great motivation for our organists. J. J. Keeler and I made lists of piano and organ repertoire and technique for various levels. When I presented our ideas to the department chairman, he felt we should proceed. A six-level organ certification program was formulated and presented to BYU Independent Study and was accepted. It has since gone through several revisions which make it even more helpful. It is a wonderful, motivational program for organists.

In 1978, I proposed to Dr. Harold Goodman that we conduct an organ workshop, which I think we then called Church Music Workshop, to train organists and conductors. Though skeptical, he supported the proposal. I sought the help of Ron Staheli in the directing of choral music and Doug Bush to help with musicology and history of the organ; later, I solicited the help of Susan Kenney. We put together a proposed program and received permission to send the information to stake presidents and bishops of the Church of the Intermountain area. Our keynote speaker that year was Ruth Barrus, perhaps the most spiritual music teacher, pianist, and organist the Church has ever known. One can still read her address and be inspired.

Some 350 people enrolled; a number that just about blew administrators away. They couldn't believe that such numbers would come.

The next year, attendance expanded to 500. The emphasis was on organ, choral, and children's music. We always had a choice

keynote speaker who talked about how music can bless a person's life. We gradually expanded the workshop to include theory, composition, voice, and piano—the various skills musicians in the Church needed. Attendance in later years rose to 1250. People loved coming.

When the Harris Fine Arts Center had to be closed for earthquake proofing, we didn't have enough facilities to hold the workshop so it was terminated for a couple of years. People even today miss the original workshop format. We decided to change the title from Church Music Workshop to Workshop on Church Music; we didn't want to give the impression that it was sponsored by the Church. It was to be a BYU program to aid church music, not a commandment from the General Authorities.

It was a marvelous experience, and we still continue the organ portion of the workshop today. It is very helpful, and maybe in some way has helped the organists be a little more specific and not detracted by a buffet of choices.

Much of the material for organ that we have had in the Church music workshop before has now been developed into computer-aided instruction and can be accessed on line in the home. But all of that was your foresight—your inspiration, your dream, and your initiative.

The workshops were a great blessing as an aid to develop our musicians in the Church.

You have occupied a unique place at BYU. You have been able to take what has always been a strong organ program to where it is a *thriving* program, whereas many university organ departments are declining, if they are not already dead. BYU's program is alive and well and it continues to be healthy and grow. That says something not only about teaching,

but about organization and thinking ahead. That comes from the roots of something far greater than education, though education is a necessary part of any organ program. That comes from spiritual roots. For some years, well before you came, that wasn't as strong as it might have been. But it was grounded when you came.

Would you share with us your testimony?

It's a privilege to speak about the wonderful treasure that I have been given, a treasure supported by my wonderful wife and her love of the gospel, the Church, and good music. I'm grateful to the Lord for the wonderful blessings given me in training, in feelings, and in good parents who loved the gospel and served with all their hearts. I've had opportunities to serve in the mission field in Germany, as a service missionary at the Jerusalem Center, and as a missionary to England.

I'm grateful to the Savior for his atonement and the great plan of salvation that's been given to us. It's an honor to serve in this great church, to train the talented people whom I've been privileged to train. I hope that I can continue to serve and train some of the wonderful students and other people who serve the Lord. I have a firm testimony of the restoration of the gospel, that God lives, and that Jesus is the Christ. I'm thankful for my wonderful years at BYU, and the wonderful students and faculty associates. I have much to thank the Lord for, and this I say in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.



Bona, Parley and Mike